

Precision Door Customer Pleads for Help

5-Month Ordeal Finds Resolution

By Tom Wadsworth, Editor, CDDC

In April, we received a phone call from a senior citizen in the San Jose, Calif., area who was desperately seeking help after a transaction with Precision Door. For her protection, she has asked that her real name not be used, so we'll call her Helen. We believe Helen's story will be useful to our industry and to customers who find themselves in a similar predicament.

Here's Helen's story.

On Nov. 10, 2012, the lifting cable on Helen's garage door came off the pulley. Her door was stuck in the open position, and she needed help. She found Precision Door's phone number in a Yellow Pages ad that seemed to promise a \$49 repair fee. After calling Precision, she understood that a \$15 online coupon would drop the repair cost to \$35, but it would cost more if new parts were needed.

In about five hours, a Precision Door technician arrived. Helen was stunned when the technician told her that it would cost \$299 to fix the cable. Further, she was told that her door hardware was bad and needed to be replaced for \$750.

What? \$750?

Before allowing the repair, Helen called Precision Door again to see if that \$299 charge was actually correct. She was told that the charge is correct and that if she called other companies, she "would still pay \$350, as that is the going rate."

So Helen reluctantly allowed

him to fix the cable problem.

After all, it was too late in the day to get another company out there. Plus, she didn't want the garage door open during the night.

When the technician proceeded to fix only the cable, he warned her that he would not be responsible for any hardware problems that might arise. Precision would later write that Helen "was advised her door would fail again as she had multiple defective parts."

The technician replaced no parts, but fixed the cable, balanced the door, and gave her an invoice with these charges:

- Service Charge \$49.95
- Thrown Cables \$299.95
- Senior discount (\$30.00)
- Total \$319.90

"It was an awful feeling that we had to pay \$319 to fix the door," Helen told us. "We knew it shouldn't cost that much. We felt powerless."

The Beginning of Woes

But Helen's problems had only started.

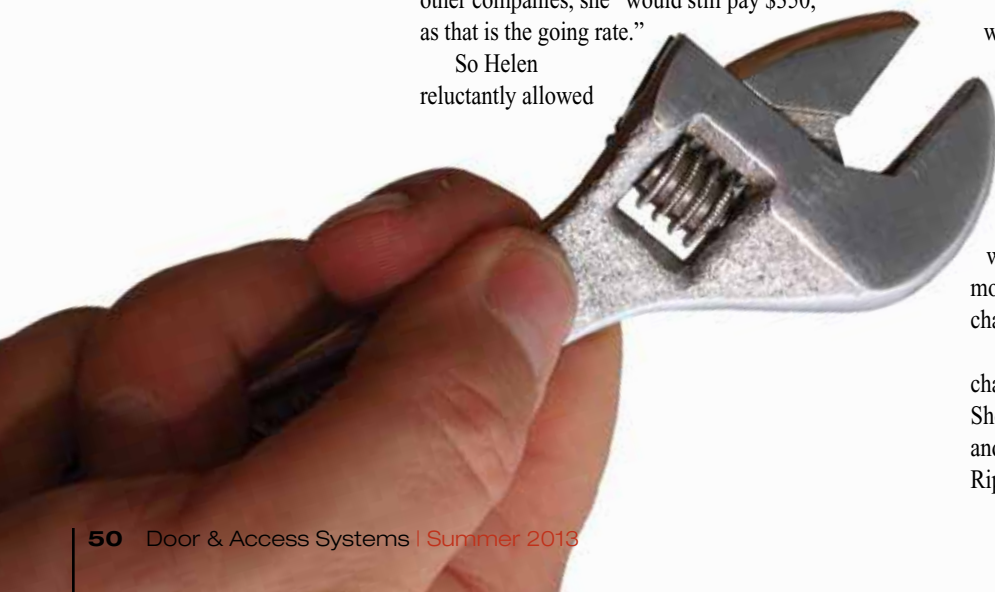
Less than two hours after the technician left, the torsion spring on that door broke. [Hmmm.] Helen couldn't open her door.

She then called Precision Door and was told that it would cost \$336 for two torsion springs and no labor.

But Helen was wary: "We thought the price was too high, and we did not want to be victims twice."

So Helen called another garage door company that replaced both torsion springs for \$199. This second technician inspected all the hardware and taught her how to oil the hinges. He said everything was in very good condition and should last for many more years. He added that his company would have charged only \$89 to adjust the cable and balance the door.

But Helen was still upset about Precision Door charging her \$319 for a simple cable fix and no parts. She searched the Internet to learn more about Precision and found many complaints on sites like Yelp.com and RipoffReport.com that were remarkably similar to her





Helen's Top 10 Tips What to Do When You Need a Garage Door Repair

After Helen's ordeal came to a happy ending, she felt inspired to draft some tips for consumers. We offered some editing assistance, and this was our final list.

experience. She told us she felt "scammed" by a "bait and switch" scheme and was the victim of "fraud."

The Search for Relief

For relief she turned to American Express, since she used that card to pay Precision's bill. In her ensuing contacts with American Express, which included two letters itemizing her problems with Precision, her problem escalated three levels.

Ultimately, she was disappointed with American Express because they relied on Precision to negotiate directly with her. In that process, she found Precision to be "extremely argumentative" and "hostile," leaving her feeling "harassed and intimidated." After giving up on American Express, she turned to the Better Business Bureau and filed a complaint. But she was still out \$319.

Finally, Helen found our summer 2011 magazine story about Dateline NBC's hidden-camera investigation that aired in May 2011. That episode exposed a technician from Precision Door of Phoenix who was caught trying to replace a brand new opener for \$527.

Helen Calls DASMA

Helen called us in April 2013, desperate for any possible ways to get her money back. We suggested that she call Precision Door's headquarters in Titusville, Fla. We told her that, in all our contacts with their corporate headquarters since 2006, we've found them to be responsive and eager to maintain a good reputation.

We also looked up the Precision Door franchise in Helen's area and learned that the franchise is a member of the International Door Association. We informed Helen about IDA's Code of Business Conduct and suggested that a call to IDA may be helpful.

We also suggested that, if one of Helen's local TV stations has a consumer reporter, he or she might take an interest in the story. Negative publicity can be a strong motivator.

1. Get competitive prices before you let someone in your garage.
2. Quickly check business reviews at BBB.org and Yelp.com.
3. Pay with a credit card that will stand behind you, but be aware that they may side with the merchant. (Credit card companies are paid by merchants for each transaction.)
4. Trust your gut. If something feels wrong, don't let them proceed with the repair. In Helen's case, the technician's quote of \$750 to replace the garage door hardware was about the same as the cost of a new door from Home Depot.
5. Read what you are signing. Don't sign it if you don't agree.
6. If you feel wronged, file a complaint with the BBB.
7. Speak directly to the owner.
8. If the owner reports to someone else, speak to that person.
9. Inform them you will share your story with the media.
10. If they belong to IDA, tell them that you plan to notify IDA that they violated its Code of Business Conduct.

Up the Food Chain

Helen decided to first call Precision Door headquarters in Titusville. She talked to Mike Brickner, who has recently replaced Ron Boyter as the person who handles operations and franchise issues. "I told him my story and said I will even go to the media for help," she explained. "He actually looked at my receipt online while I was talking to him. He was so positive and receptive."

Helen said Brickner knew the owner of the Precision Door franchise in Helen's area. "He said the owner is a good guy, and he promised to contact him," she recalled.

At 3 p.m. on that same day, the local Precision owner indeed called Helen to make an appointment to talk the next day. Helen called him the next morning and was pleasantly surprised that he listened to her story. Better yet, the owner told Helen that he would refund the \$319.

A Happy Ending

About 15 minutes after she hung up the phone, Brickner called her and asked if the local franchise owner had called. "Wow! I didn't expect such excellent follow-up," she said. Helen told him that she would get a full refund and that the problem was resolved. "I was so happy," she recalled.

A few weeks later, Helen got confirmation from American Express that the full \$319 was added to her account.

She sent us an email, saying, "Words cannot express the appreciation I have for you in helping me with this ordeal that I suffered in the past five months. Thank you so much!" ■